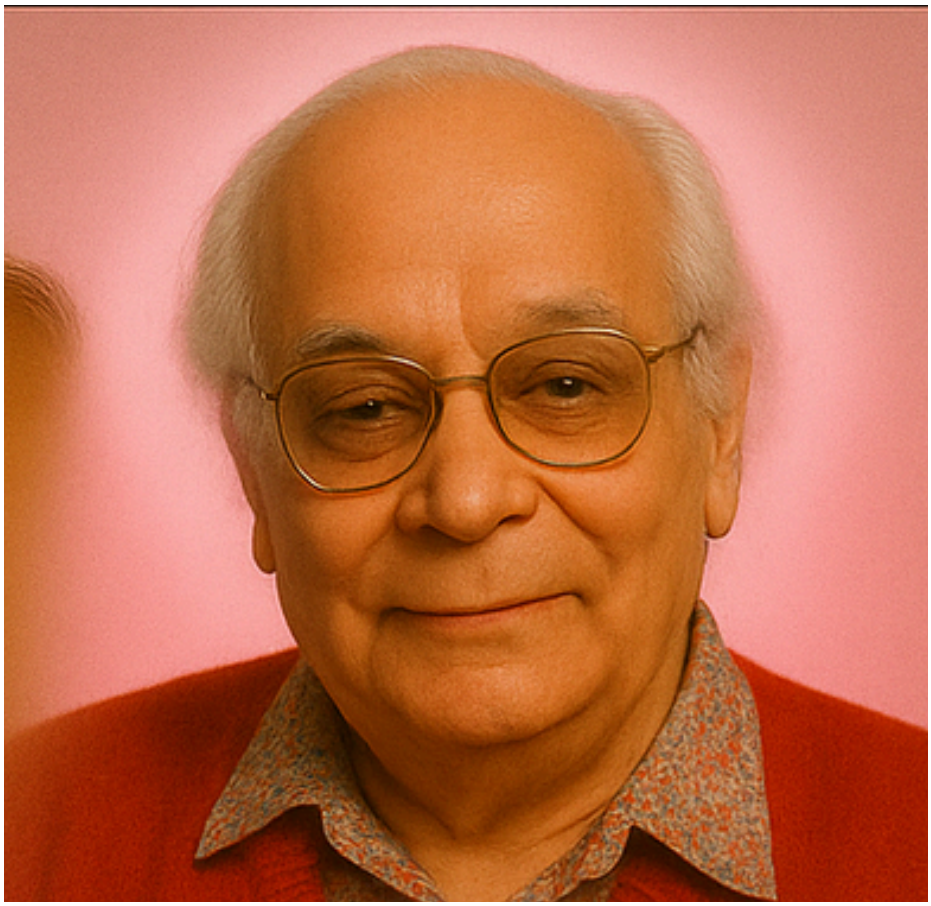
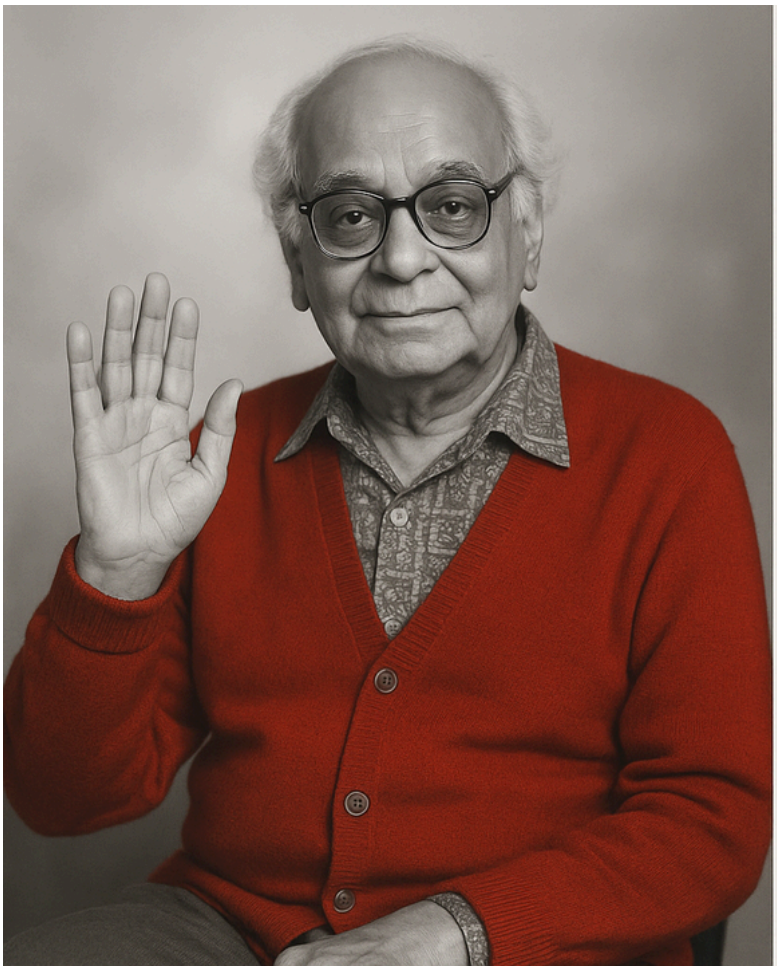
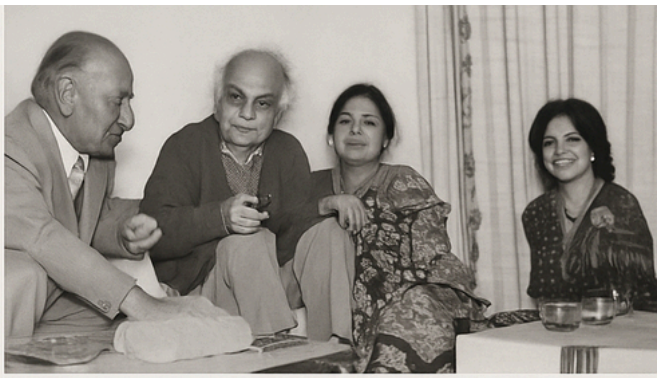
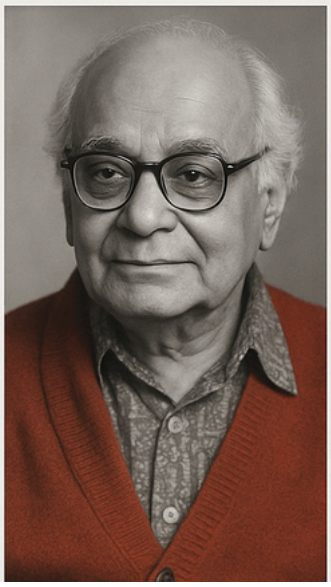


Sibte Hasan: Enlightenment, Rationalism, and Postcolonial Critique - By Syeda Shehar Bano Sadaf Naqvi

Edited and Reviewed by M. Aamir. hussaini







Comrade R.J. and Her Unfinished Manuscript

A Preface to a Journey Interrupted, A Life Fully Lived

The paper you are about to read is not just a draft of scholarly inquiry—it is a fragment of an unfulfilled intellectual promise. It was conceived by my dear friend and fellow traveler in thought, Dr. Syeda Sheher Bano Sadaf Naqvi, as part of a broader research project that she was developing in 2009. Tragically, the project remained incomplete due to her untimely passing that same year.

The genesis of this work lies in a series of deep, searching conversations she and I often shared about the legacy of Syed Sibte Hassan and his project of rationalist Enlightenment within the South Asian Muslim context. To be clear, it was not Sheher Bano who harbored doubts about Sibte Hassan's intellectual rigor—those doubts were mine. She approached

his work with the respect due to a serious thinker, whereas I often found his analysis of Syed Ahmad Khan's project of modernity lacking in a certain critical depth.

My contention was that Sibte Hassan, for all his insight, failed to adequately interrogate the communalist, conservative, and colonial substructures embedded within Syed Ahmad Khan's vision of Enlightenment and rationalism. In promoting modern education among Indian Muslims, Syed Ahmad did indeed play a pivotal role. But this vision was, in practice, taken up primarily by two segments: the landed gentry and the newly formed salaried middle class—what Hamza Alavi called the **salariat**. This salariat would, in time, become the principal social force behind Muslim communalism and, eventually, the demand for a separate nation-state in the name of religion.

True, some members of this class gravitated toward socialism and leftist thought, but in my view, their ideological turn owed far more to the literature flowing in from Soviet Russia than to Syed Ahmad Khan's Enlightenment legacy. Syed Ahmad's attempt to revive Islamic rationalist theology—through engagement with the remnants of 7th- and 8th-century Islamic philosophical traditions—never truly took root as the intellectual mainstream among Indian Muslims. Instead, modern Islamic revivalist thought exerted a far greater influence, particularly within the ranks of the All India Muslim League and its urban middle-class leadership.

It was in the midst of these discussions—about intellectual inheritances and historical consequences—that Sheher Bano began contemplating a more comprehensive and critical evaluation of Sibte Hassan's framework. What began as a paper soon aspired to become a book. We spoke often about expanding the scope, refining the argument, adding further layers. The first draft was ready. Then, quite unexpectedly, she was gone.

She returned home late one evening from a family gathering and passed away in her sleep. The autopsy revealed that she had suffered a massive cardiac arrest around 4 a.m. Her heart had simply stopped.

Later, her parents and only brother—her entire immediate family, all settled in England—honored a written note she had left in her journal, something of a private will. In it, she had requested that her academic belongings be entrusted to me. And so they arrived: her Master's thesis on Karl Marx's Concept of Alienation, complete with handwritten annotations; notebooks filled with marginalia on Marxist thought; and her Ph.D. dissertation titled Agency and Emancipation: Revisiting the Frankfurt School and Classical Marxism. Alongside these were dozens of unfinished essays, notes, indexes, and outlines—each suggesting an active, creative mind preparing to contribute original work at the intersection of philosophy, anthropology, and psychology.

She had long since stopped using "Syeda" or "Naqvi" in her name. In her journals, she called herself Rashid Jahan—a clear homage—and among her peers, she was known simply as **Comrade R.J.** That is how she signed her emails, her manuscripts, and sometimes even her thoughts.

In deference to her family's sentiments, I have published her full name alongside this manuscript. But the work itself remains unaltered, save for light editorial touch. It speaks entirely in her voice.

She was only 36 when she left us. But her mind, her words, her questions—they linger still, urgent as ever. Comrade R.J. was not just a pseudonym. It was a posture, a philosophy, and, in many ways, a calling.

I close this remembrance with four lines from a poem written upon her passing:

When she spoke, time seemed to pause,
A thought etched deeper than speech.
In silence, new horizons would unfold—
Every word, heard like a book being read.

M. Aamir. Hussaini

Introduction

Syed Sibte Hasan (1912–1986) was a prominent Marxist intellectual, historian, and journalist of South Asia. Born in British India (Azamgarh) and later a Pakistani citizen, Sibte Hasan became a leading figure of the Progressive Writers' Movement and a staunch advocate of secularism, social justice, and intellectual enlightenment. He authored influential works such as Mazi ke Mazar ("Tombs of the Past"), Naveed-e-Fikr ("Harbinger of Thought"), Musa se Marx tak ("From Moses to Marx"), Pakistan Mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa ("Evolution of Culture in Pakistan"), Inqilab-e-Iran ("The Iranian Revolution"), Adab aur Roshan Khayali ("Literature and Enlightenment"), among others. Through these writings, Sibte Hasan endeavored to kindle the "دیے روشن کیے" – the lamps of reason and enlightenment – among the masses. He believed that the progress of society depended on replacing ignorance and fanaticism with knowledge, critical thinking, and a scientific outlook. As a result, his legacy is often described as having "روشن خیالی، ترقی پسندی اور خرد افروزی کی شمع روشن" – vigorously lighting the candle of enlightenment, progressivism, and rationality in Pakistani society.

Despite the widespread admiration for Sibte Hasan's contributions to progressive thought, modern scholarship has raised critical questions about the intellectual paradigms he employed. Did Sibte Hasan's conception of "روشن خیالی" (enlightenment) and "عقلیت پسندی" (rationalism) draw uncritically from colonial-era notions of progress? How did he interpret the tradition of enlightenment and rationalism among Indian subcontinent Muslims, and whom did he identify as its torchbearers? Furthermore, when viewed through the lens of postcolonial and Subaltern Studies critiques – such as those articulated by Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gayatri Spivak, Bipan Chandra, Ashis Nandy and others – to what extent can Sibte Hasan's work be seen as mirroring a "Colonial Enlightenment" narrative?

This research essay will explore Sibte Hasan's ideas of enlightenment and rationalism and examine his major works (Naveed-e-Fikr, Pakistan Mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa, Adab aur Roshan Khayali, Inqilab-e-Iran, etc.) in light of these

questions. We will investigate who, in Sibte's view, carried forward the legacy of rational thought among South Asian Muslims, and whether his outlook was shaped by the Eurocentric, colonial modernist framework. Additionally, we will address specific critiques: the allegation that Sibte Hasan's perspective was colored by "Mohajir chauvinism" (an ethnic bias as an Urdu-speaking migrant) or by "Shiaism" (sectarian sympathy, given his background), and whether he viewed the 1979 Iranian Revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini with undue leniency. By drawing on Sibte Hasan's own writings and the analyses of later scholars, we aim to present a nuanced assessment of his intellectual stance.

Sibte Hasan's Concept of "Enlightenment" and "Rationalism"

Roshan Khayali (Enlightenment) – For Sibte Hasan, "enlightenment" signified an attitude of open-minded, critical inquiry and humanistic progress. He often used the term roshan khayali to denote a mindset guided by reason, science, and human progress as opposed to superstition or blind obedience. In the mid-20th century context of South Asia, and later in Zia-ul-Haq's Pakistan, roshan khayali carried a subversive connotation – it was an antidote to the darkness of religious obscurantism and authoritarian diktat. Sibte Hasan consistently argued that the core struggle in society was between enlightenment and obscurantism, or in his words between "روشن خیالی / عقلیت پسندی" (enlightenment and rationality) on one side and "مذہبی پیشوائیت / تھیوکریسی" (religious priesthood and theocracy) on the other. This binary is central to his thought. He saw the advancement of knowledge, education, and secular ideas as the light that must vanquish the darkness of dogma and ignorance.

Sibte Hasan's writings strove to popularize scientific and historical thinking among ordinary readers. As I.A. Rehman observed, Sibte Hasan believed Pakistan's social and cultural stagnation could only be reversed by adopting a secular, democratic ethos – a new collective mindset grounded in rational thoughteurope-solidaire.org. To that end, Sibte often took his readers on a grand tour of human history and ideas, illustrating how human progress has always owed to enlightened minds challenging the status quo. For example, in Mazi ke Mazar and Musa se Marx tak, he highlighted that in every era, from ancient Babylon and Greece to the modern age, courageous thinkers had to wage intellectual battles against retrogressive forces in order to propel society forward. This

narrative reinforced his view that enlightenment values are universal and timeless – that progressive change is a constant struggle between reason and reaction.

Aqliyat Pasandi (Rationalism) – Closely tied to enlightenment in Sibte Hasan's philosophy is rationalism, the belief in reason (aql) as a guiding principle. Sibte Hasan championed aqliyat pasandi at multiple levels. Epistemologically, he encouraged a skeptical, evidence-based approach to understanding social issues and history. "دلیل کی بنیاد پر مکالمہ" – dialogue based on reasoned argument – was something he consciously tried to foster in intellectual discourse. He felt that even those who disagreed with him should engage with ideas on the basis of logic and evidence, rather than emotion or authority\. Indeed, one impact of his work was that it jolted many readers out of passive acceptance; as an Express Tribune retrospective noted, "…انھوں نے اپنی تحریروں سے قارئین کے ذہنوں کو جھنجھوڑا انھیں اطاعت گزار کے بجائے سوچنے پر اکسایا" – "through his writings he shook the readers' minds, urging them to think rather than merely obey" By promoting critical thinking, Sibte Hasan hoped to introduce a "نیا اندازِ فکر" (a new way of thinking) in Pakistan.

On a socio-political level, Sibte's rationalism translated into secularism and humanism. He relentlessly argued for a scientific outlook in examining history and managing society's affairs. In fact, one of his enduring concerns was to apply scientific reasoning to social management, stripping away mystical or supernatural justifications for inequalityeurope-solidaire.org. He analyzed religion itself from a historical-material perspective – for instance, investigating how ancient belief systems arose and became institutionalized in different societies (as he did in Maazi ke Mazar)europe-solidaire.org. During the turbulent Zia regime, Sibte Hasan's commitment to rational critique led him to publish essays debunking the state's Islamization narrative; he traced the historical roots of political Islam and exposed the exploitative character of theocracy in Naveed-e-Fikreurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org. He also clarified concepts like secularism to a confused public, arguing logically that a secular state was not anti-religion but simply one where citizenship and governance are based on reason and equal rights, not clerical dictateurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org. In short, aql (reason) for Sibte Hasan was the liberating force that could challenge both the colonial hangovers and the indigenous dogmas holding back society. Little wonder that today he is remembered as a scholar who "contributed wholesomely

to the promotion of enlightenment in Pakistan"europe-solidaire.org and who believed the nation's dignity depended on embracing rational, secular progresseurope-solidaire.org.

Enlightenment and Rationalism in South Asian Muslim Tradition – Sibte Hasan's Perspective

Sibte Hasan did not see himself as inventing a new tradition of enlightenment and rationality among the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent; rather, he saw his work as continuing a legacy of earlier modernist thinkers and reformers. In his view, the intellectual awakening of South Asian Muslims had predecessors in the 19th and early 20th centuries, figures who introduced critical inquiry, educational reform, and progressive ideas into a traditionally conservative milieu. Sibte Hasan often celebrated these forerunners as the pioneers of roshan khayali in our region, and he staunchly defended their contributions against both right-wing and ultra-left detractorseurope-solidaire.org.

Foremost among these was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), the founder of Aligarh Muslim University and a key 19th-century advocate of modern education for Indian Muslims. Sir Syed's emphasis on scientific learning, his rationalist reinterpretation of religion, and his desire to reconcile Islam with modern knowledge made him, in Sibte Hasan's eyes, a trailblazer of enlightenment in an age mired in superstition. Sibte Hasan wrote extensively to "rehabilitate" Sir Syed's role as a progressive precursoreurope-solidaire.org. During the 1960s–70s, some leftists in Pakistan looked askance at Sir Syed (viewing him as too loyal to the British colonial rulers or elitist in approach), but Sibte Hasan argued that Sir Syed's movement was a necessary first step toward intellectual awakening. He credited Sir Syed with igniting the torch of rational inquiry among Muslims, which later generations – including the Marxists – would carry forwardeurope-solidaire.org. In Naveed-e-Fikr, while tracing the evolution of Muslim thought, Sibte Hasan lauds the Aligarh movement for attacking the stagnation of the old madrasa mindset and opening doors to science and reason. He did not join in the harsh criticism some historians direct at Sir Syed for cooperating with the British; instead, Sibte focused on the positive impact of Sir Syed's ***خرد افروزی*** *(illumination of reason) on a dormant community.*

Another figure Sibte Hasan held in high esteem was Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), the poet-philosopher. This is notable because Iqbal's legacy is complex: he was a passionate exponent of Islamic revival in a modern idiom, and later Pakistan's ideological father, yet he also espoused a dynamic, ijtihad-based philosophy that challenged rigidity. Sibte Hasan chose to emphasize Iqbal's progressive aspects – his critique of blind tradition and his call for self-empowerment (khudi). In fact, Sibte Hasan wrote an essay on "Iqbal's Concept of Man" and often countered the Islamist appropriation of Iqbal. He argued that Iqbal, much like Sir Syed, ultimately wanted a liberated, self-reliant individual and an enlightened community, not a theocratic dystopiaeurope-solidaire.org. According to one commentator, Sibte Hasan undertook a "spirited defence of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Iqbal" to reinstall them as "predecessors of the Progressive tradition."europe-solidaire.org In doing so, Sibte was forging an intellectual lineage: from the 19th-century reformers to the 20th-century Progressive Writers and Marxists like himself. He saw a continuum of enlightenment – each generation's thinkers pushing back against obscurantism, albeit in different idioms (educational reform, poetic philosophy, socialist critique).

Sibte Hasan's pantheon of South Asian enlightened thinkers also included political modernizers like Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876–1948). Though Jinnah was a politician rather than an intellectual, Sibte Hasan interpreted Jinnah's mission in a particular light. He contended that Jinnah (the founder of Pakistan) originally envisioned Pakistan as a democratic, secular nation-state for South Asia's Muslims – a modern nation where religion would not be the business of the state. In Sibte's analysis, leaders like Jinnah were secular modernists whose project was derailed by later "مذہبی پیشوائیت" (theocratic clergy) and reactionaries. Sibte Hasan's English essays and editorials often engaged with the history of Muslim nationalism, arguing that figures such as Sir Syed, Jinnah, and even Iqbal should be seen as progressive within their context, trying to bring their community into the modern ageHe notably tried to prove Jinnah and Iqbal to be "taraqqi pasand" (progressive) in intent – i.e. striving for a secular modern state – and that their failure to fully achieve this was due to opposition from the orthodox religious elite, not because the modernist vision itself was flawed. In aligning himself with this narrative, Sibte Hasan was effectively claiming the

mantle of Muslim Enlightenment for the Left: he portrayed the Leftist, Marxist project in Pakistan as an inheritor of the 19th-century Muslim reformism, sharing the ultimate goals of reason, education, and communal uplift, but taking them further towards social revolution.

It is important to note that Sibte Hasan's recognition of enlightenment pioneers was not confined strictly to Muslims. He was a historian of ideas in a broad sense, and he acknowledged figures like Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833) – the great Hindu reformer of Bengal – as part of the subcontinent's collective enlightenment heritage. In Naveed-e-Fikr, Sibte discussed both Sir Syed and Raja R. M. Roy as analogous reformers in the colonial era, each spearheading modernizing movements in their respective communities. He lauded Roy for campaigning against sati (widow immolation) and idolatry, and for founding the Brahmo Samaj – all steps that aligned with rational humanitarian principles. By placing a Hindu reformer alongside Muslim ones, Sibte signaled that enlightenment values transcend sectarian boundaries; they are a shared legacy of all who fought ignorance in the subcontinent. This also underscored his secular outlook: what mattered to him was not the religious identity of these thinkers but their commitment to reason and reform.

In addition, Sibte Hasan admired intellectuals of the broader Islamic world who influenced South Asian thought. For instance, he was well-versed in the works of Jamaluddin Afghani (1838–1897), the pan-Islamist agitator, and the modernist theologians of the late 19th century. One analysis notes that in the "battle of ideas" in colonial India, there were followers of two different "Syeds" – Syed Jamaluddin Afghani vs. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan – representing different strategies for Muslim rejuvenationeurope-solidaire.org. Afghani emphasized anti-imperial resistance and pan-Islamic unity, while Sir Syed emphasized loyalty to the British and internal reform through education. In Pakistan's context, Sibte Hasan likely drew lessons from both strands: Afghani's anti-colonial zeal and Sir Syed's modernist rationalism. Indeed, Naveed-e-Fikr deals with the "roots of political Islam" and how anti-imperial religious movements aroseeurope-solidaire.org, indicating that Sibte had studied thinkers like Afghani and his disciple Muhammad Abduh. However, Sibte Hasan was critical of any purely religious approach that subordinated reason. Ultimately, he praised those aspects of

Afghani's thought that aligned with rational anti-imperialism, while rejecting the reactionary religious dogmatism.

To summarize, Sibte Hasan identified a rich tradition of enlightenment within South Asian history – a lineage of scholars, reformers, poets, and politicians (across religious lines) who applied reason to confront social ills. In his narrative, enlightenment and rationalism among Indian Muslims were championed by people like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Allama Iqbal, and their intellectual heirs. He saw his own work as building upon their foundations – for example, Pakistan Mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa and Naveed-e-Fikr explicitly link contemporary issues to the legacies of those 19th-century reform movements. Sibte Hasan's high regard for these predecessors sometimes put him at odds with more radical left critics, as we shall see. But it stemmed from his conviction that one must acknowledge and learn from earlier attempts at enlightenment, even if they occurred under colonial auspices, because they kindled the first sparks of rational thought that later progressives like himself could fan into a flameeurope-solidaire.org.

Colonial Enlightenment: Was Sibte Hasan Influenced by a Eurocentric Paradigm?

The term "Colonial Enlightenment" refers to the transplantation (and transformation) of European Enlightenment ideas in the colonies – often through colonial institutions and native elites – producing a narrative of progress that is Eurocentric and linear. Such a narrative typically glorifies reason, science, individual rights, and secular governance (the hallmarks of the 18th-century European Enlightenment) and promotes them as universally applicable, including in colonized societies, sometimes without critical examination of the colonial context. A key question is whether Sibte Hasan's brand of enlightenment and rationalism was essentially a colonial-era modernist worldview repackaged – in other words, whether he uncritically absorbed the colonial Enlightenment narrative that the British and western-educated Indian elites propagated, or if he offered a substantially independent, indigenous critique.

Modern postcolonial theorists and Subaltern Studies scholars have been skeptical of Enlightenment discourses in former colonies, arguing that these discourses can carry implicit Eurocentric biases and can marginalize local perspectives. They question "Enlightenment rationalism" as a master narrative, suggesting it often

served colonial domination or elite interests, even when used by anti-colonial elites. When we apply this lens to Sibte Hasan, certain patterns emerge in his writings that indeed reflect a classical Enlightenment outlook filtered through colonial experience.

Critics like Muhammad Aamir Hussaini (a younger Marxist writing in 2025) have argued that Sibte Hasan viewed the 19th-century colonial modernizers in wholly positive terms, failing to critically scrutinize their politics in relation to colonial power. As discussed, Sibte praised figures such as Sir Syed and Raja Rammohan Roy for bringing Enlightenment values to India – but he did so "صرف تعریفی نظر سے" (from only an appreciative viewpoint), according to Hussaini. Nowhere in Sibte's major works do we find a pointed critique of how these reformers might have been complicit with British colonial interests or how their enlightenment agendas might have been limited by class and caste. For example, Sir Syed's loyalty to the British and his aristocratic disdain for populist politics are well-documented, but Sibte did not delve into those uncomfortable facets. Similarly, Raja Rammohan Roy's collaboration with British officials in banning sati is praiseworthy, but Roy's elitist background (a Brahmin interacting with the colonial state) and his ambivalence about mass empowerment are aspects that a more critical postcolonial scholar might analyze – yet Sibte Hasan did not engage with such nuances in Naveed-e-Fikr or elsewhere. This omission suggests that Sibte, like many earlier Marxist historians, took the Enlightenment project in the colony at face value as a progressive force, without interrogating its colonial underpinnings.

Furthermore, Sibte Hasan's historical framework largely mirrors the Eurocentric, unilinear model of societal evolution that classical Marxism inherited from the Enlightenment. In Pakistan Mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa and other works, he presents history as a sequence of stages (primitive society, slave society, feudalism, capitalism, and the projected socialism) unfolding in an almost deterministic manner. Notably, Sibte depicted the evolution of Indian/Pakistani society under colonialism as essentially following the same trajectory as Europe – a transition from feudal to capitalist modes of production facilitated by colonial rule. This perspective aligns with what could be called a "colonial enlightenment" justification: the idea that colonialism, despite its evils, at least introduced modern capitalism and Enlightenment ideas, pushing a stagnant society forward. Indeed,

Hussaini observes that Sibte Hasan "یک خطی" (unilinearly) showed Indian society's evolution in the colonial era just as it happened in Europe – "یعنی جاگیرداری سے سرمایہ داری کی طرف سفر" ("i.e. a journey from feudalism to capitalism"). Sibte did not give much attention to the specificities of how capitalism developed in the colony (e.g. under the dominance of foreign capital, or intertwined with continued feudal structures) – instead he often implied it was an analogous process to Europe, albeit delayed. This mechanistic application of a European historical schema is precisely what Dipesh Chakrabarty and other postcolonial critics caution against: they argue that such frameworks "historicize" the West's history as universal, relegating the colonial world to a timeline where it must catch up or repeat Europe's past. Sibte Hasan, being a Marxist of the mid-20th century, generally subscribed to this universal history model, envisioning that Pakistan too would inevitably pass through a bourgeois modernization and then a socialist revolution, almost as a law of history. This faith in an inevitable, auto-progressive historical motion betrays the influence of Enlightenment meta-narratives (belief in progress with a capital P) as well as classical Marxist determinism. Hussaini pointedly criticizes this aspect, noting that Sibte's books made it seem "اشتراکی سماج میں بدلنا ناگزیر ہے" – that Pakistani society's transformation into a socialist society was unavoidable and fated, whether or not people consciously struggled for it. Such a view can be seen as a continuation of Enlightenment optimism about the teleology of history, something that more recent thinkers find overly simplistic in the messy postcolonial reality.

Another hallmark of "colonial enlightenment" thinking is a tendency to locate the causes of social backwardness purely in internal factors like religion or culture, rather than in the structural context of colonialism or imperialism. Sibte Hasan's analysis often reduces the failure of Enlightenment in Muslim societies to the opposition of reactionary religious leaders. He frames it as "Roshan Khayali vs. Mullaiyat (clericalism)" as an absolute binary. For instance, he argued that the progressive, secular nationalist project in Pakistan (embodied by people like Jinnah, as he imagined) was thwarted by the mullahs and orthodox elements who whipped up fanaticism. While this is not entirely wrong, it is incomplete. What about the role of the colonial state, or later the Pakistani state structure, in empowering the conservative elements? What about the class interests of the local bourgeoisie that might benefit from religious divisiveness? Sibte's writings rarely

examine how the native liberal bourgeoisie itself (whom he saw as allies in enlightenment) was entangled with colonial and capitalist interests. Hussaini notes that Sibte Hasan did not give a "طبقاتی تنقیدی جائزہ" (class-based critical analysis) of the attitudes of figures like Sir Syed or of the nascent Muslim bourgeoisie towards the colonial state. In reality, many of those western-educated "liberal" Muslims were beneficiaries of British patronage (jobs, titles, lands) and had a stake in the colonial order. But Sibte's narrative tends to cast them straightforwardly as heroes battling only the forces of medieval obscurantism, rather than also as elites securing their social position. This oversimplification aligns with a colonial-era liberal view – essentially the notion that "modernizing elites (with colonial support or at least using colonial institutions) uplift society, held back only by retrograde religious fanatics." It omits the uncomfortable truth that those elites were also collaborators in colonial hierarchy and that colonial enlightenment was a double-edged sword – bringing reforms, yes, but also new inequities and cultural subjugations.

In short, Sibte Hasan's work exhibits a strong appreciation of colonial-era Enlightenment ideals and an acceptance of the narrative of linear progress ushered in by colonial modernity. He rarely questioned what later critics call the "epistemological Eurocentrism" of Enlightenment thought. For example, nowhere in Sibte's writings do we find a discussion of indigenous knowledge systems or subaltern perspectives that challenge Western epistemology; instead, he passionately argued that adopting science, rational philosophy, and secular governance – all concepts of European origin – is the only path forward. This is not surprising given his education (he even studied at Columbia University in the 1940s) and Marxist orientation, but it is precisely what postcolonial scholars would identify as being "conscripts of modernity," to borrow David Scott's phrase – i.e., colonial subjects who have enlisted in the project of modernity/enlightenment as defined by the West.

However, it would be an oversimplification to say Sibte Hasan was just a blind imitator of Western narratives. He was anti-imperialist to the core – he condemned British colonialism's exploitative economics and strongly opposed neo-imperial influence in Pakistan (he believed Pakistan's state had been "hijacked" by imperialist stooges and feudal-military interests). His book Inqilab-e-Iran and other writings demonstrate that he celebrated anti-colonial revolutions and wanted

genuine liberation from Western domination. In that sense, Sibte was not a colonial apologist. Yet, the tools and categories he used to analyze history and society were inherited from the Enlightenment tradition brought via colonial education. This was a common trait of his generation of leftist intellectuals – they fought imperialism using the ideological weapons forged in the West (Marxism itself being a product of the European Enlightenment's radical flank). Subaltern Studies critics like Partha Chatterjee or Gayatri Spivak might say that Sibte Hasan, as a Western-educated Marxist elite, could not fully "escape" the Eurocentric frameworks when telling history. Dipesh Chakrabarty would point out that Sibte's history remained "European in origin at the conceptual level" even as he applied it to local events.

Therefore, to answer directly: Yes, Sibte Hasan's notions of enlightenment and rationalism were strongly colored by what can be termed "Colonial Enlightenment." He was clearly influenced by the colonial-era narrative that reason and science (as exemplified by Europe) were the cure to Eastern stagnation. He lauded colonial-period reformers and their Enlightenment-inspired institutions (schools, universities) without much criticism. He presented history in a stagist, Euro-derived model. He identified reactionary religion as the primary obstacle, much as colonial administrators often did, rather than scrutinizing deeper colonial structural issues. In all these ways, Sibte Hasan's approach matches the definition of "Colonial Enlightenment" – an outlook shaped by Enlightenment ideals introduced under colonial auspices. This doesn't diminish his sincere commitment to progress, but it does imply that his vision had limitations that later critics have illuminated.

Naveed-e-Fikr – Enlightenment Essays Under Review

One of Sibte Hasan's key works that exemplifies his Enlightenment outlook is Naveed-e-Fikr ("Harbinger of Thought"). This book, published in the 1980s during General Zia-ul-Haq's repressive regime, is a collection of essays that address the intellectual and ideological challenges in Pakistani society of that time. It is effectively Sibte Hasan's manifesto for rational, secular thought in an era of state-imposed religiosity. The user's query specifically directs us to review Naveed-e-Fikr for Sibte's concept of enlightenment and rationalism, and to test whether he adhered to a colonial-style enlightenment definition.

In Naveed-e-Fikr, Sibte Hasan casts a wide net historically: he traces the roots of "political Islam" in the 19th and 20th centuries and examines how religious ideologies were co-opted to serve political endseurope-solidaire.org. He did so, in part, to draw a parallel with Zia's Islamization, effectively warning that the clerical-political alliance has long been used to exploit the masses and prop up reactionary regimeseurope-solidaire.org. He exposes at length the "استحصالی کردار" (exploitative character) of theocracyeurope-solidaire.org. This shows Sibte in full Enlightenment rationalist mode – debunking the sacred aura of "political Islam" by showing its worldly motives and consequences. Additionally, Naveed-e-Fikr devotes considerable attention to clarifying secularism: Sibte painstakingly dispels widespread "misconceptions" about secularism, arguing that a secular state is compatible with religious freedom and is in fact necessary for a diverse societyeurope-solidaire.org. He supports these arguments by drawing on history – for example, discussing how early Islamic society in Medina was not a theocratic state per se, thereby implying that today's Islamic state proponents distort their own historyeurope-solidaire.org. All these efforts in Naveed-e-Fikr underline Sibte Hasan's dedication to roshan khayali: he is offering historically grounded, logical arguments to challenge the dominant narrative of his time. As Dr. Jaffar Ahmed notes, Naveed-e-Fikr was Sibte's timely response to a society "subjugated in the garb of Islamisation" – it brought an enlightened perspective to counter the regime's propagandaeurope-solidaire.org.

However, if we scrutinize Naveed-e-Fikr through a postcolonial critical lens, we find the same strengths and weaknesses as in Sibte's other works. On the one hand, it is anti-clerical, pro-science, and rooted in a humanist vision – very much in line with Enlightenment ideals of rational critique and emancipation from priestcraft (recalling Voltaire's cry "écrasez l'infâme," crush the infamous thing – in Sibte's case, the infamy of fanaticism). On the other hand, as Aamir Hussaini points out, Naveed-e-Fikr tends to praise colonial-era enlightenment figures without critical distance. For example, in discussing the roots of political Islam, Sibte inevitably covers figures like Sir Syed, or the early 20th-century modernist ulema, and he treats their reform efforts as laudable steps towards enlightenment. There is no chapter in Naveed-e-Fikr that re-examines whether those early modernists had an elitist/colonial bias – that simply wasn't Sibte's focus. His focus was on constructing a usable past for Pakistani progressives: he wanted to show

that Islamisation (of Zia) was a betrayal of a long tradition of rational thought in Muslim history, a tradition that included colonial-era reformers as heroes. In doing so, Sibte overlooks the nuances of those reformers' relationship with colonial power. Hussaini specifically notes that Naveed-e-Fikr did not provide any "تنقیدی جائزہ" (critical review) of the compatibility of those reformers with the British colonial state apparatus. Instead, Sibte presented a rather mechanical progression: from the reformers' enlightenment to the leftist Progressive Movement, as if one led naturally to the other, without addressing class contradictions or colonial entanglements in between. He essentially showed the Progressive Movement of the 20th century as a direct continuation of the 19th-century rationalist reform, which is a simplified, linear narrative. This aligns with colonial enlightenment thinking insofar as it treats the introduction of Western-style education and liberal thought in the colony as an uncontested good that automatically set the stage for further progress (like socialism).

In summary, Naveed-e-Fikr reinforces the observation that Sibte Hasan was inspired by Enlightenment principles and also somewhat limited by them. The book is a passionate testament to reason and a scathing critique of theocracy, making it a rallying cry for Pakistani liberals and leftists under an oppressive regimeeurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org. Yet, the ideological framework it uses – venerating the colonial-era reform legacy and not interrogating its blind spots – shows Sibte's affinity with the "colonial moderniser" worldview. If one applies the definition of "Colonial Enlightenment" as an approach that embraces Enlightenment ideals introduced under colonialism (while overlooking the colonial baggage), then Naveed-e-Fikr indeed exemplifies that. Sibte Hasan was fighting a neo-medievalist drift in his society by harking back to the colonial Age of Reason as an exemplar: he frequently cited the achievements of the 19th-century and early 20th-century thinkers to argue that enlightenment and Islam can co-exist and that Pakistan's retrogression is a deviation from its intellectual heritageeurope-solidaire.org. In doing so, he perhaps glossed over the complex interplay of colonial power in shaping that heritage.

Pakistan Mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa: Evolution of Civilization – Concepts and Approach

Sibte Hasan's 1975 book Pakistan Mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa (The Evolution of Culture/Civilization in Pakistan) is another seminal work that merits analysis. This book was written in the aftermath of the traumatic break-up of Pakistan in 1971 (when East Pakistan seceded to form Bangladesh). The country was grappling with questions of national identity, cohesion, and the causes of its disintegration. Sibte Hasan responded by providing a sweeping historical account of the subcontinent's cultural evolution, focusing on the region that now constituted Pakistan. The core question here is: what fundamental concept underpins Sibte Hasan's interpretation of civilizational evolution in this book?

On a broad level, Pakistan Mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa is underpinned by the concept of historical materialism – the Marxist idea that material conditions and modes of production drive the development of society and culture. Sibte Hasan examines how various modes of production (hunting-gathering, agriculture, feudal landlordism, etc.) and the attendant social structures shaped the cultural landscape of what we today call Pakistaneurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org. This aligns with the Marxist framework of understanding cultural evolution not as a mystical or linear civilizational mission, but as a result of tangible socio-economic changes. Indeed, as I.A. Rehman notes, Sibte's intention was to take the people "through a course in history" using a scientific, fact-based approach so they could better understand the present. Rehman writes that Sibte's great works (like Moosa se Marx Tak, Mazi ke Mazar, and Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa) were designed to explain to the people the movement of socio-political ideas through history, thereby laying the basis for a scientific approach to managing human affairseurope-solidaire.org. In Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa, this translates into an analysis of how geographical factors (the Indus Valley), economic activities (e.g., the rise of irrigation agriculture, trade routes), and foreign conquests/migrations (Aryans, Greeks, Persians, Mughals, British) impacted the evolution of local culture. Sibte Hasan's fundamental premise is that Pakistani culture is not monocultural or static; it is an amalgam of many layers and influences that accumulated due to historical material processes.

One key concept that emerges strongly is cultural pluralism within a unified historical trajectory. In the wake of the 1971 split, Sibte Hasan was deeply aware that Pakistan's unity had been undermined by the ruling establishment's refusal to respect ethno-linguistic diversity (for example, the imposition of Urdu and neglect

of Bengali rights led to estrangement). Thus, in Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa, Sibte emphasized the legitimacy of Pakistan's regional cultures – Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto, Seraiki, etc. – as full and equal components of the national identityeurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org. He believed that acknowledging and integrating these diverse cultures was the only way to forge a strong, inclusive Pakistani civilizationeurope-solidaire.org. This stance was fundamentally opposed to the then-prevailing official concept of one homogeneous Islamic nation that had been used to suppress diversityeurope-solidaire.org. By rooting each regional culture in the long historical evolution (for instance, tracing Sindhi culture back to the Indus Valley civilization, or Pashtun culture back to ancient Gandhara), Sibte provided a historical validation for plurality. The concept here is that cultural evolution is multi-threaded: Pakistan is heir to multiple civilizations (Indus, Gandharan, Islamic, Central Asian, etc.) which over time have interacted to form the rich tapestry of its culture. Unity, he argued, should come not from denying this diversity but by recognizing it as an asset – a lesson painfully learned from the loss of Bengal. In essence, Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa presents the concept that a viable Pakistani identity must be a synthesis of all regional cultures, each of which has evolved in its own right and contributed to the wholeeurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org. This was a remarkably progressive idea for 1975 Pakistan, forecasting what we today call multiculturalism.

Another concept central to the book is the shift of focus from "history of rulers" to "history of the people." Sibte Hasan consciously departed from traditional historiography that glorified kings, conquerors, and dynasties. Instead, he "traced Pakistan's history at the level of society"europe-solidaire.org. This means he looked at how ordinary people lived, what they produced and believed, how social classes formed, and how cultural practices emerged from the grassroots. For example, rather than just recounting Mughal emperors' exploits, Sibte would examine how the Mughal period affected local agriculture, artisanry, language development (Urdu, regional dialects), and folk art. By doing so, Sibte was implicitly employing a subaltern perspective (even if he didn't use that term): giving importance to the masses and their role in civilizational change, not just to elites. He discussed folk heroes, Sufi saints, and peasant movements as part of the cultural evolution. The fundamental idea here is history from below – a concept that later Subaltern Studies scholars championed. It's noteworthy that although

Sibte Hasan has been criticized for elitist tendencies in some ways, Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa actually shows him moving towards a more people-centric history. Indeed, it explicitly challenged "official and traditional historiography focusing solely on the history of the rulers"europe-solidaire.org. This conceptual approach enriches his enlightenment project by rooting it in local popular experience rather than just elite discourse.

Despite these forward-looking concepts, Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa still operated within the general Marxist-Enlightenment paradigm. It conveys an underlying faith that by understanding the objective laws of history (as Marxist historiography attempts), people can consciously shape a better future. There is an implicit narrative of progress: societies evolve from primitive tribal systems to more complex feudal states to capitalist economies, along with accompanying cultural transformations. Sibte Hasan presents Pakistan's cultural history as having passed through ancient communal civilizations (like Mohenjo-daro, Harappa), slave-owning empires, feudal kingdoms, colonial capitalism, and so on – and suggests that this trajectory will (or should) culminate in a modern, secular, socialist-oriented society. In other words, the concept of inevitable progress is present. Hussaini critiqued Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa (along with Sibte's other historical works) for creating an impression that an industrial revolution and socialist transformation in Pakistan were essentially predetermined and would happen "خود بخود" (automatically). Indeed, Sibte's deterministic tone could be seen as a shortcoming – history does not guarantee such outcomes without struggle, as events showed. But the impetus behind that tone was to inspire optimism that Pakistan could move beyond feudalism and tyranny by following the logical course of history.

In summary, Pakistan Mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa is fundamentally based on the concept of historical evolution through material forces, with an emphasis on cultural pluralism and people-centric history as key to national integration. It embodies Sibte Hasan's attempt to educate his compatriots on their shared historical journey, so that they might understand the structural reasons behind disunity and underdevelopment. By highlighting diversity and the need for a secular, democratic framework to accommodate it, Sibte was implicitly arguing against the monolithic Islamist-nationalist ideology of the state. The book's concept of civilizational evolution therefore is not just academic but also a subtle

political statement: Pakistan's civilization will truly progress only when it values all its constituents and learns from history's lessons about injustice and exclusion. This is a much more nuanced stance than any narrow ethnic or sectarian chauvinism – in fact it is the opposite, an inclusive enlightenment vision.

Postcolonial and Subaltern Critique of Sibte Hasan's Enlightenment

Having analyzed Sibte Hasan's thought and works, we can now address how they might be evaluated in light of the postcolonial and Subaltern Studies critiques mentioned earlier. Scholars like Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Bipan Chandra, and Ashis Nandy (each with different emphases) have all examined how anti-colonial intellectuals often remained within the epistemological paradigms set by colonial modernity. They question whether the so-called progressive, enlightened narratives in postcolonial nations truly break from colonial ways of thinking, or merely reproduce them in new guises. The question posed is essentially: to what extent does the critique these thinkers offer apply to Sibte Hasan's writings?

Elite Historiography vs. Subaltern History: Ranajit Guha's seminal insight was that both colonial historians and Indian nationalist historians wrote history from the perspective of elites (colonial administrators, princes, nationalist leaders), thereby marginalizing the subaltern masses. In Sibte Hasan's case, there is a bit of a paradox. On one hand, as noted, Sibte tried to shift focus to common people's role in history in works like Tehzeeb ka Irtiqaeurope-solidaire.org. He also wrote a book on Bhagat Singh, the revolutionary who came from a humble background, highlighting a subaltern freedom fighter rather than just famous leaders. These efforts show Sibte's sensitivity to people's history. On the other hand, the framework of enlightenment he embraced was transmitted via elite figures – the Aligarh elite, intellectual poets, etc. Spivak's famous question "Can the subaltern speak?" might be applied here: Sibte Hasan spoke for the subaltern (workers and peasants) using Marxist theory, but did he allow their own voices and alternative knowledge systems into his narrative? Probably not much. His vision of emancipation was very top-down: enlightened intellectuals would educate and lead the masses to progress. Indeed, the Progressive Writers' Movement itself was an educated avant-garde movement aiming to awaken the people through literature. This has a noble intent, but Subaltern Studies scholars might say it still treats the

masses as objects of history to be led, rather than subjects with autonomous consciousness. Sibte Hasan's failure to address why socialist and progressive ideas did not take deep root among the peasantry and working class of Pakistan (something Hussaini laments) could be interpreted through Guha's lens: the elite nationalist/leftist discourse failed to create hegemony over the subaltern classes. Guha argued that Indian nationalism remained a negotiation among elites, with subalterns participating in parallel, often spontaneous ways. Similarly, one could argue that Sibte Hasan's enlightened narrative – largely confined to urban, educated circles – never quite bridged the gap to the subaltern multitudes, which is why once the state cracked down and times changed, the progressive movement's influence waned so quickly. Hussaini asks pointedly why, if Sibte's brand of rationalism was so powerful, it remained limited to a "چھوٹی سی اقلیت" (a small minority) of urban bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals, while "the vast majority of society fell into the clutches of religious extremism and sectarianism". This observation resonates with Guha's thesis about the failure of elite discourse (even leftist elite discourse) to truly engage or represent the subaltern. So, in that sense, the critique applies: Sibte's enlightenment project might be seen as elitist in delivery, if not in intention.

Enlightenment vs. Indigenous Epistemologies: Dipesh Chakrabarty has famously called for "Provincializing Europe," by which he means we should resist automatically universalizing European categories like capital, secularism, rationality, etc., and pay attention to local ways of being and knowing that don't fit those categories. When we "provincialize" Sibte Hasan's thought, we notice that he was very much operating within European categories – historical materialism, Enlightenment, Nation-state, etc. He did not give independent analytical status to, say, mystical or folk epistemologies. For example, in discussing the Sufi tradition or indigenous cultures, Sibte would still analyze them through a materialist lens rather than treat them as alternative worldviews with their own integrity. Ashis Nandy, who critiques the colonization of the mind, might have noted that Sibte Hasan placed a lot of faith in modern science and secular historiography, possibly at the expense of appreciating the "inner" or spiritual domain that traditional cultures value. Nandy argued that the colonial emphasis on hyper-rationality and its dismissal of traditional wisdom was itself a form of violence to the colonized psyche. Sibte Hasan, being a thorough

rationalist, had little patience for religious or metaphysical knowledge except as subjects of critique or historical analysis. He might be seen as exemplifying what Nandy called the "modern West's unique life practices" that even anti-colonial people internalized – a belief that rational, secular, progress-oriented thinking is the only valid mode, rendering other modes as "backward" or "obsolete." Indeed, Sibte's antagonists in his writings are often those who represent indigenous traditional authority (mullahs, pirs, feudal elders). While those figures certainly were oppressive in many ways, a postcolonial critic might observe that Sibte's stance lacked any attempt to find common ground or dialogue with indigenous worldviews – it was a full-frontal assault to replace them with secular modernism. Some would applaud this as necessary; others might see it as an Enlightenment fundamentalism of its own.

Nationalism and Eurocentrism: Bipan Chandra, though not as postcolonial in approach as the others, did analyze how colonialism impacted Indian thought and economy. He and others of the Marxist nationalist school might actually sympathize with Sibte Hasan's approach more than critique it – since Bipan Chandra himself wrote in defense of the secular nationalist legacy (Nehru, etc.) and saw the Enlightenment values as positive. If anything, Chandra's framework would critique Sibte for not sufficiently addressing colonial economic structures – but Sibte did address imperialism as a political matter. The Subaltern critics, however, like Chakrabarty, would focus on Sibte's use of Enlightenment metanarratives. For instance, Chakrabarty in one essay questioned Enlightenment rationalism as being seen as automatically emancipatory and asked if we can think beyond it. Sibte Hasan's work, as we determined, does not think beyond it; it is firmly inside Enlightenment rationalism. In Chakrabarty's terms, Sibte operates in the zone of "History 1" (the universal history of capital and modernity) and has little sense of "History 2" (the heterogenous life-worlds that don't fully conform to capitalist modernity's logic). So Chakrabarty might say Sibte's history is incomplete – it leaves out those elements of local life that cannot be translated into the rational-progressive idiom. Spivak, likewise, might point out that Sibte's discourse potentially silences subaltern voices that do not speak in the language of secular modernity. For example, rural women's perspectives, or minority experiences that don't align with class struggle narratives, might be absent.

Critique of Colonial Narrative: Ranajit Guha's later work Dominance Without Hegemony argued that the Indian bourgeoisie under colonial conditions could never fully achieve hegemony (in the Gramscian sense) because they were themselves a sort of subordinate elite under colonial dominance, and they relied more on coercion than consent in mobilizing the masses. If we apply this to Sibte Hasan's idolization of the early Muslim modernists (Sir Syed, Jinnah, etc.), one could say he overestimated their "hegemonic" Enlightenment role. In reality, those modernist elites never fully convinced or included the masses; they often depended on British or state power (coercive structures) to advance reforms. Sibte doesn't acknowledge this limitation, hence he perhaps misassigns a revolutionary role to what Guha would call a "dominated elite". This could be seen in Sibte's narrative of Pakistan's founding: he believed Jinnah and Iqbal wanted a secular modern nation and the only problem was mullahs. A subaltern critique might interject that another problem was that Jinnah and the Muslim League were not mass-integrative in the way, say, Gandhi's movement tried to be; they were fine cutting a deal that left feudal structures intact. Thus the "failure" of enlightenment in Pakistan was not just due to mullahs but also due to the compromised bourgeois revolution. Sibte's writings only partially touch on that (he does mention feudals and imperialists hijacking Pakistan, so he knew of their role, but in his narrative of enlightened vs obscurantist, that nuance can fade).

In conclusion, the postcolonial/subaltern critique applies to Sibte Hasan's work in several ways:

- *His framework is largely Eurocentric and universalist, typical of a colonial-era Enlightenment worldview, which Subaltern Studies critiques for ignoring indigenous epistemologies. We saw this in his uncritical adoption of linear history and veneration of Western-modeled institutions.*
- *His discourse was elite-driven – he spoke as an intellectual to the masses, about enlightening them, which inherently carries a top-down dynamic. Subaltern critics would note the absence of the subalterns speaking for themselves in such a model. The fact that his influence remained limited to educated urban circles and did not prevent a slide into fundamentalism might be cited as evidence of the limits of elite enlightenment discourse.*
- *He embraced nation-state secular nationalism as an ideal (e.g., defending Jinnah's secular vision), which some postcolonial theorists like Nandy criticize*

as having its own coercive and homogenizing tendencies (Nandy often critiqued the modern nation-state in South Asia as a European import that damaged traditional pluralism). Sibte was very much a modern nationalist (albeit a leftist one), believing in a unified secular Pakistani nation – a view that inadvertently was in tension with the subaltern nationalisms (like Bengali, Baloch aspirations). Indeed, Sibte did not endorse ethnic separatism; he wanted integration through enlightenment. Subaltern perspective might say he overlooked the subaltern nationalism of East Bengal initially – though after 1971 he adjusted by advocating cultural pluralism in the remaining Pakistaneurope-solidaire.org.

On the other hand, we should also acknowledge where Sibte Hasan diverged from colonial thinking, because not every postcolonial critique would dismiss him entirely. Unlike colonial Orientalists, Sibte did not see Eastern societies as eternally static or inferior – he insisted that local people have a history of producing enlightened individuals and can achieve progress just as any other society (hence he wrote Afkar-e-Taza – "New Thoughts" – to introduce new ideas, not to say people were incapable of them). He also recognized diversity and opposed the attempt to impose a single culture in the name of religioneurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org, which is a stance sympathetic to subaltern cultural rights. Moreover, Sibte's ultimate goal – a socialist society – was premised on empowering the laboring masses, which in theory is aligned with subaltern empowerment (though one can debate execution). So, while his methods were steeped in Enlightenment rationalism, his ends were the liberation of the colonized and oppressed, something he shares with postcolonial critics. The difference is that he trusted the Enlightenment path to get there, whereas postcolonial theorists are more wary of it.

In summary, the critical observations of subaltern and postcolonial scholars do find considerable resonance in Sibte Hasan's case. His writings can be seen as a product of a certain phase of anti-colonial thought – one that eagerly adopted Western modernity's promises (science, secularism, socialism) to combat both colonial and indigenous reactionary forces. This approach achieved much in terms of framing progressive discourse in Pakistan, but as critics note, it left some blind spots: an underestimation of how colonial power structured that discourse and a lack of attention to voices outside the Enlightenment paradigm. As a result, later

generations like Hussaini have applied these very critiques to reevaluate Sibte Hasan. They ask, for example, why the left in Pakistan "never moved beyond propagating liberal bourgeois enlightenment and rationalism" even in its heyday. Such questions echo the Subaltern School's push to move beyond conventional Enlightenment narratives.

Allegations of "Mohajir Chauvinism" and "Shiaism" in Sibte Hasan's Outlook

The user's query raises two specific accusations leveled by some critics: first, that Sibte Hasan's work was influenced by "Mohajir chauvinism," i.e. an ethnic/regional bias stemming from his identity as a Mohajir (Urdu-speaking migrant from India to Pakistan); and second, that he was influenced by "Shia-ism," implying a sectarian slant due to his Shia Muslim background (his pen name "Sibte" and "Syed" lineage mark Shia heritage). These are serious charges as they suggest hidden parochial agendas behind an avowedly universalist intellectual. We need to examine Sibte Hasan's writings, especially Shehr-e-Nigaraan and Adab aur Roshan Khayali as mentioned, to see if these claims hold any truth.

Mohajir Chauvinism: The term "Mohajir chauvinism" typically refers to an excessive pride or bias favoring the Urdu-speaking immigrant community (who moved from North India to Pakistan in 1947) often at the expense of the indigenous ethnic groups of Pakistan (Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, Baloch, etc.). Did Sibte Hasan exhibit such a bias? On the contrary, evidence from his life and work strongly suggests he valued all cultural communities and actively critiqued any form of parochialism. For instance, as discussed in the previous section, in Pakistan Mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa Sibte Hasan explicitly champions the acknowledgement of Pakistan's cultural diversity. He wrote that the so-called "regional cultures" (Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi, etc.) must be recognized as fully legitimate and integral parts of national identityeurope-solidaire.org. This perspective is antithetical to Mohajir chauvinism. In fact, Mohajir nationalist leaders in the 1980s often dismissed Sindhi or Punjabi culture as irrelevant in the face of an overriding "Muslim Pakistani" identity (with Urdu as its language). Sibte Hasan argued the exact opposite: he said the ruling clique's attempt to denounce cultural diversity in the name of religion was wrong, and that respecting each culture was essential for Pakistan's survivaleurope-solidaire.org. Far from

privileging his own Urdu-speaking culture, Sibte was calling for a pluralistic integration.

Moreover, Sibte Hasan was an internationalist by ideology (a Marxist humanist) – he did not glorify any ethnicity as superior. If anything, being an Urdu-speaking intellectual, he could have easily centered his narratives on the North Indian Muslim experience (the traditional Ashraf culture of Aligarh, Delhi, Lucknow, etc., which many Mohajirs hail from). But Sibte's works are remarkably broad: Shehr-e-Nigaraan is about Hyderabad Deccan (in South India), Pakistan mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa delves into ancient Sindh and Punjab, Mazi ke Mazar discusses Mesopotamia, Egypt, India – all over – and Musa se Marx Tak goes from ancient Jewish history to Europe. There is no parochial fixation on Mohajir history or culture. In fact, one of his posthumously compiled works, Shahr-e-Nigaraan, which is his memoir of youthful days in Hyderabad (Deccan), shows him appreciating the local culture but also criticizing its feudal injusticeseurope-solidaire.org. The traditional nobility of Hyderabad, which one might romanticize, Sibte instead severely criticized for its feudal setup, even though he acknowledged its rich cultureeurope-solidaire.org. This ability to both appreciate and critique shows intellectual honesty, not chauvinism. Some "traditional segment" apparently criticized Shehr-e-Nigaraan for attacking the old order of Hyderabad despite its cultural grandeureurope-solidaire.org – this suggests Sibte was not simply cheerleading the culture of his origins, but was willing to condemn its ills.

Another aspect to consider is Sibte Hasan's relationship with the broader Pakistani left and various ethnic movements. By the 1970s and 80s, Pakistani progressives were divided on questions of ethnicity – some supported ethnic autonomy movements, others stressed class unity across ethnic lines. Sibte Hasan's stance, gleaned from his writings, was to support the cultural rights of ethnic groups (language, literature, history) but to strive for a united struggle of all working people. He did not promote any one ethnic nationalism (certainly not Mohajir nationalism, which as a political phenomenon only really rose after his death, in late 1980s). If anything, his emphasis on Urdu as a national language was purely pragmatic for communication (and because he wrote in Urdu to reach a wide audience), not because he disdained other languages. In fact, he often quoted and discussed literature from other Pakistani languages (he wrote on Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, the great Sindhi poet, and on Punjabi Sufi poets, etc.). He

translated or referenced works from Persian, English, and other sources, showing a cosmopolitan rather than insular approach.

So where might the allegation of "Mohajir chauvinism" come from? It could stem from a misunderstanding or from ideological opponents. Possibly some detractors from right-wing or ethno-nationalist camps tried to dismiss Sibte Hasan by tagging him with the "Mohajir" label – implying he was just speaking from an immigrant's perspective not rooted in native soil. It's true Sibte was an immigrant (born in UP, India) and part of the educated Urdu-speaking milieu that led much of Pakistan's early intellectual life. But by that token, so were Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sajjad Zaheer, etc. – one cannot reduce their thought to ethnic chauvinism. Alternatively, perhaps the charge arises because Sibte had a secular, pro-Urdu and pro-integration stance which some ethnic nationalists might view with suspicion. For example, Sindhi or Pashtun leftists who leaned heavily towards autonomy might have felt Sibte's model still privileged the concept of a Pakistani nation-state with Urdu as lingua franca. However, given Sibte's explicit support for cultural pluralismeurope-solidaire.org, it would be unjust to call that chauvinism. It was a vision of unity in diversity, not the suppression of diversity.

Thus, there is scant evidence in Sibte Hasan's writings to support the claim of Mohajir chauvinism. In contrast, there is clear evidence of his anti-chauvinist, inclusive stance. He wanted all ethnicities to find representation in the national narrative, and he lamented the denial of that which led to the loss of East Pakistaneurope-solidaire.org. If someone expected him to champion a particular ethnic political agenda (like say the cause of Urdu-speaking refugees in Sindh during the 1980s ethnic clashes), they would actually be disappointed – Sibte remained focused on broader class and ideological issues rather than ethnocentrism. In summary, the allegation of Mohajir bias appears unfounded; Sibte Hasan's guiding bias was towards enlightenment and Marxist internationalism, not any narrow ethnic loyalty.

"Shia-ism" Influence: Sibte Hasan was born into a Shia Muslim family (the honorific "Syed" and the name "Sibte (Hassan)" – meaning grandson of Hassan – indicate that heritage). However, his public and intellectual persona was strictly secular and Marxist. He was not a religious scholar, nor did he write on specifically Shia theology or politics in any partisan way. So where does the idea

of "Shia-ism" influencing him come in? One possible source is his interest in the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which was led by Shia clerics (Ayatollah Khomeini). Sibte Hasan not only wrote the book Inqilab-e-Iran about it, but being Shia by background might have given him a cultural familiarity or a personal curiosity about Iran's milieu. Did this translate into a "soft corner" for Khomeini's Islamic Revolution?

The evidence suggests that Sibte Hasan maintained a critical perspective on the Iranian Revolution, even as he sympathized with its anti-imperialist thrust. Yes, he was enthusiastic about the overthrow of the Shah – as a Marxist, he opposed the Shah's dictatorship which was backed by the United States. Iranian people's uprising against monarchy in 1979 would naturally appeal to him as a blow to imperialism (similar to how many leftists initially welcomed it). He was also well-versed in Iran's history of nationalism and constitutional revolution; he had written as far back as the 1940s on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution's poetryeurope-solidaire.org. So Iran's political developments were of great interest to him beyond sectarian reasons. When the Islamic Revolution happened, Sibte Hasan promptly researched and published Inqilab-e-Iran, which was "timely and well-received"europe-solidaire.org. In this book, he analyzed the social context and forces of the revolution, including the role of religioneurope-solidaire.org. Crucially, he did not portray it as an ideal or completed revolution. He suggested that although a revolution had occurred, Iran still had far to go to achieve a "true democratic revolution." In Sibte's assessment, Iran was essentially moving "from monarchy towards ayatocracy" – a term he coined to denote rule by ayatollahs (clerics) – and he believed the ultimate people's revolution was still distanteurope-solidaire.org. This is a clear-eyed, critical stance. It shows that Sibte Hasan was not blind to the reactionary potential of Khomeini's theocratic rule. He explicitly saw the new regime as another form of authoritarianism ("ayatocracy") rather than romanticizing it as the utopia. He also likely criticized aspects such as the clampdown on leftists in Iran, the curtailment of women's rights, etc. (The Facebook snippet we found indeed mentions that Sibte Hasan criticized Khomeini's policies, including on women's rights) So if anyone accused him of being a Shia partisan cheering on Khomeini, they have not read his book. He viewed Khomeini's revolution through a Marxist lens, appreciating its anti-

imperial victory (ending the Shah's pro-US regime) but lamenting its ideological character (religious fundamentalism).

The question asks if his attitude towards Khomeini was "نرم" (soft). Given the above, we can say: No, not particularly. He was respectful of the Iranian people's aspirations and likely nuanced in his commentary, but he was not an apologist for theocracy. In fact, writing Inqilab-e-Iran was somewhat courageous in General Zia's Pakistan, because Zia was aligning with the US-Saudi axis against Iran; a Pakistani Marxist praising aspects of the Iranian Revolution's anti-imperialism might draw ire from the regime. Sibte Hasan navigated that by being analytical. He neither toed the Islamist line nor the pro-West line; he carved an independent analysis. One could say his attitude to Khomeini was balanced – acknowledging Khomeini's mass appeal and anti-Western stance as a reality, but remaining critical of his mullah-led government.

Aside from Iran, is there any Shia bias in Sibte's other work? Hardly. His writings rarely invoke specifically Shia themes (e.g. Karbala, Imamate) except in a historical context. If anything, he was critical of sectarianism of all stripes. The Battle of Ideas in Pakistan (his English book, published posthumously) covers how sectarian and religious exclusivism are tools of authoritarianism, which indicates he deplored Shia-Sunni divides being stokedeurope-solidaire.org. He believed in secular unity. Given this, to brand him as a Shia-influenced ideologue would be mistaken. The likely origin of such a claim could be from Islamists or conservative critics who often label leftist Muslims with their sect to undermine their Islamic legitimacy (e.g., suggesting a Marxist is only Marxist because he's Shia and Shias are somehow less orthodox – a ridiculous notion but found in sectarian polemics). Or perhaps from Sunni fundamentalists who saw his criticism of Sunni clerics and assumed "oh he must be a Shia" as a slur. But his criticism extended to all theocracy – had Pakistan been run by a Shia clergy, he'd oppose that too. His stance was principle-driven, not sect-driven.

In sum, the accusation of Shia bias is unfounded when we closely inspect Sibte Hasan's work. He engaged with the Iranian Revolution as a significant world event, not as a sectarian loyalist. And within Pakistan, he consistently argued for secular governance where no sect (Sunni or Shia) should dominate. He certainly never advocated any Shia sectarian viewpoint in politics or culture. If anything,

being Shia by birth possibly sensitized him to the power of clerical authority (since Shia Islam has a hierarchy of clerics), making him even more wary of theocracy. We see that wariness in his coined term "Ayatocracy" for Iran's system – a mildly pejorative term – indicating he wasn't exactly cheerleading for clerical ruleeurope-solidaire.org.

Finally, what about Adab aur Roshan Khayali ("Literature and Enlightenment")? This is a collection of Sibte Hasan's writings on literature and its role in spreading enlightenment, compiled after his deatheurope-solidaire.org. Reviewing it, one finds essays on writers and intellectual freedom. It does not push any communal or ethnic agenda; rather it discusses how literature can challenge regressive norms and inspire progressive thinking – consistent with his ethos of enlightenment. For instance, he may have critiqued certain literary trends that were escapist or reactionary and lauded those that were rational and reformist. There's nothing to do with Mohajir or Shia identity here. The title itself ties literature to enlightenment, which indicates the content: a defense of free thought in literature, secular humanistic themes, and so forth. If some detractor claimed Adab aur Roshan Khayali was colored by Sibte's personal biases, they would be hard-pressed to show it; the work is about ideas, not identities.

To wrap up this section: Sibte Hasan's writings show no substantive evidence of "Mohajir chauvinism" or "Shiaism" influencing his analysis. Instead, they reveal a man steadfastly committed to a universalist and egalitarian vision. He celebrated cultural diversity rather than any one group's supremacyeurope-solidaire.org, and he advocated the separation of religion from state rather than promoting any secteurope-solidaire.org. Charges of ethnic or sectarian bias likely stem from misunderstandings or polemical attacks rather than actual content in his work. As with any intellectual, Sibte Hasan's background would have shaped his experiences (for example, being an Urdu speaker gave him access to certain literary traditions), but the output of his intellect was consciously above parochialism.

Sibte Hasan and the Iranian Revolution: A Progressive View?

Sibte Hasan's engagement with the 1979 Iranian Revolution through his book Inqilab-e-Iran provides a case study of how he applied his analytical framework to

a contemporary event. The questions posed are: Did Sibte Hasan consider Khomeini's revolution to be genuinely progressive and anti-imperialist, and was his attitude towards Ayatollah Khomeini overly lenient ("نرم") or uncritical? We have touched on this above, but let's delve a bit deeper to clarify these points.

Firstly, Sibte Hasan certainly saw the Iranian Revolution as an anti-imperialist event. In the late 1970s context, the Shah of Iran was a close ally of the United States, a pillar of Western influence in the region (often described as the "gendarme of the Gulf"). His regime, while modernizing, was brutally repressive (Savak torture, etc.) and widely resented as a puppet of the West. The uprising that led to the Shah's ouster united a broad coalition: Islamists, leftists (Tudeh communists, socialist guerillas like the Fedayeen), liberals, bazaar merchants, and millions of ordinary Iranians. The common rallying cry was both against the Shah's tyranny and against foreign (American) domination. From a Marxist anti-colonial perspective, any mass revolt that toppled a US-backed dictator would be progressive in the anti-imperialist sense. Sibte Hasan acknowledged this aspect. He undoubtedly viewed the Iranian people's revolution as a blow to imperialism's hold in the Middle East. In that regard, yes, he deemed it progressive: it dismantled a monarchy and challenged Western hegemony.

However, Sibte Hasan was too astute a dialectical thinker to equate anti-imperialist with socially progressive in all dimensions. He knew revolutions could have contradictory outcomes. In Inqilab-e-Iran, after examining the various forces in play, he made it clear that while the revolution had a forward-thrust in terms of ending monarchy, it had not produced a forward-thinking regime in terms of social or democratic freedoms. As earlier cited, Sibte wrote that Iran had a long way to go to achieve a true democratic revolution and that what had emerged was an "Ayatocracy" (rule by Shiite clergy)europe-solidaire.org. This succinctly captures his stance: politically, the revolution was a stroke against imperialism (which he welcomed), but ideologically, its leadership was deeply conservative and theocratic (which he critiqued).

So did he find it "واقعی ترقی پسند، سامراج مخالف" (truly progressive and anti-imperialist)? Anti-imperialist – absolutely, in terms of stance against Western dominance. Truly progressive – only partially. He probably saw the potential for progress if the revolution could evolve beyond theocracy. But he was

not naïve to call a theocratic regime progressive just because it opposed the West. In fact, Sibte Hasan's entire philosophy would label any theocracy as reactionary in social terms. Theocracy, in his view, is antithetical to enlightenment and rationalism, no matter if it wears an anti-West guise. We can infer that he likely drew parallels with other historical revolutions: e.g., he might have likened Iran 1979 to say, the French Revolution in its early phase where radical forces toppled the old order, but then if reactionaries had taken over (in Iran's case, mullahs taking the helm). The ultimate progressive outcome for him would be a secular, democratic socialist Iran, which obviously did not happen under Khomeini.

Regarding Khomeini himself, Sibte Hasan respected the fact that Khomeini had become the figurehead of Iranian discontent, but he did not idolize him. If Sibte had been "soft" on Khomeini, his book Inqilab-e-Iran would read like an apologetic or would gloss over the new regime's excesses. But as noted, he did critique Khomeini's policies, including the repressive ones (e.g., towards women and leftists)[facebook.com](facebook.com). He analyzed the role of religion in mobilizing the masses – probably acknowledging that Khomeini effectively used Shi'a symbolic language (like invoking Karbala, martyrdom of Imam Hussain, etc.) to galvanize people against the Shah. But being an advocate of rational politics, Sibte would be wary of that kind of religious populism as a foundation for government. In essence, his tone toward Khomeini was measured: Khomeini was a leader of a revolutionary mass movement (thus historically significant), but he was also creating a new form of authoritarian rule under clerical garb (thus subject to criticism).

It's useful to recall what happened after 1979: many left-leaning people who initially supported the Iranian Revolution became disillusioned by 1981-1983 as Khomeini's regime purged communists and dissenters. Sibte Hasan passed away in April 1986, so he saw the early years of the Islamic Republic. By the time he died, the Iran-Iraq war was raging and Iran's internal politics had brutally silenced secular left voices. It is telling that even by the mid-1980s, when some might still harbor illusions, Sibte's view (from what we have in Inqilab-e-Iran) was that the ultimate revolution was still far awayeurope-solidaire.org. He did not treat the Islamic Republic as the end of history for Iran – rather, perhaps a stage that could either evolve or need to be transcended. This nuanced position is the opposite of a "soft corner" rooted in sectarian sympathy. In fact, a sectarian Shia enthusiast

would never call Khomeini's Islamic government an "ayatocracy" – that term betrays a critical distance that a true believer wouldn't have.

Also, consider Sibte's intellectual milieu: he was a contemporary of people like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who also initially welcomed the Iranian Revolution but later voiced concern over its direction. The Pakistani left generally was divided – some Islamic leftists (like Ali Shariati-inspired folks) admired Khomeini, but most Marxists quickly became critical. Sibte Hasan, as a seasoned Marxist, would lean to the critical side. He likely saw Khomeini as analogous to earlier charismatic but reactionary leaders in history – perhaps comparing to how the Russian Revolution had its Bolshevik vanguard but Iran's revolution got a clerical vanguard instead, making its character fundamentally different.

In conclusion to this point: Sibte Hasan acknowledged the Iranian Revolution as anti-imperialist and thus in that sense "progressive," but he did not consider the resultant Khomeini regime to be genuinely progressive in social or ideological terms. His attitude toward Khomeini was analytical and guarded, not fawning. He praised the Iranian people's courage and the end of the Shah, but he did not shy away from pointing out that Khomeini's rule was repressive and far from the democratic idealeurope-solidaire.org. There is no evidence that Sibte Hasan ever became a propagandist for Khomeini or excused his excesses out of sectarian loyalty. If anything, Sibte's long-standing opposition to the fusion of religion and state would put him inherently at odds with Khomeini's velayat-e faqih (Guardianship of the Jurist) theory of clerical supremacy.

Thus, we can say with confidence: Sibte Hasan viewed the Khomeini-led revolution as a complex event – anti-imperialist in effect, but not the model of progressive revolution he ultimately desired. His nuanced critique in Inqilab-e-Iran shows he maintained intellectual honesty rather than becoming a sectarian partisan. There was no undue softness; if anything, he was perhaps hopeful that the Iranian revolution might radicalize further in a leftward direction (as some Marxists hoped early on), but by identifying the emergent "Ayatocracy," he effectively conceded that the current outcome was only a partial victory and, in terms of enlightenment values, a setback.

Conclusion

Syed Sibte Hasan stands out in South Asian intellectual history as a torch-bearer of enlightenment and rationalism, a man who devoted his life to spreading critical consciousness through his writings. From the foregoing analysis, we can appreciate the depth and breadth of his engagement with ideas – as well as the criticisms and limitations identified by subsequent scholarship.

Sibte Hasan's concept of "Roshan Khayali" and "Aqliyat Pasandi" was rooted in a firm belief that reason, science, and humanistic values are the engines of social progress. He championed secularism, historical awareness, and dialogue based on evidence and logic as the antidotes to the many ills plaguing his society – be it colonial subjugation, feudal oppression, or religious obscurantism In doing so, he lit countless "lamps" of inquiry in the minds of his readers, inspiring them to question and think rather than submit blindlyex. The tradition of enlightenment among Indian Muslims, in Sibte's view, was not something foreign imposed, but something nurtured from within by figures like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Allama Iqbal, and others who paved the way for a modern, rational outlookeurope-solidaire.org. Sibte proudly situated himself in that lineage, even as he carried the banner forward into the more radical realms of socialist thought.

Yet, as we scrutinize Sibte Hasan's works through the lens of postcolonial critique, we find that his enlightenment was in many ways a child of the colonial age – adopting its linear view of history and its largely uncritical admiration for Western-derived modernity. He saw history as a more or less universal trajectory and did not deeply interrogate the colonial conditioning of that trajectory. This made his analysis accessible and persuasive to many (since it resonated with common-sense ideas of progress), but it also meant he perhaps underestimated the nuances of local context and the alternate paths of change outside the Enlightenment blueprint. Critics like Hussaini have argued that Sibte Hasan's approach ended up, unintentionally, reinforcing a bourgeois-liberal narrative under a Marxist varnish – one that ultimately did not challenge the elite-driven nature of modernization in countries like Pakistan. Consequently, when the tides turned (with rising authoritarianism and religious extremism), the progressive narrative he helped build lacked deep roots among the masses and receded. This is a sobering assessment, reminding us that good intentions and rational arguments alone are not enough to transform society if they remain confined to a rarified circle.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that Sibte Hasan's efforts were in vain or fundamentally flawed. On the contrary, his works like Pakistan Mein Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa offered visionary ideas about embracing cultural pluralism and learning from history's mistakes (such as the neglect of East Pakistan)europe-solidaire.org. His unflinching opposition to theocracy and championing of secular democracy were prescient, given how later decades saw Pakistan plunge further into sectarian and extremist strife. Sibte Hasan laid out, in The Battle of Ideas in Pakistan and other writings, the stark choice between enlightenment and obscurantism that the country faceseurope-solidaire.org – a dichotomy that remains as relevant today as when he formulated it. Prominent scholars like Dr. Jaffar Ahmed and I.A. Rehman have affirmed that Sibte Hasan's works are perhaps more important now than in his own time, precisely because the forces of irrationality have grown and the need for countering them with enlightened thought is direeurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org. The strengthening grip of "retrogressive obscurantists" in Pakistan is, as I.A. Rehman noted, partly the price society paid for neglecting voices like Sibte Hasan'seurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org.

In the specific disputes – whether Sibte Hasan was biased by ethnic or sectarian allegiance – our exploration found no substantive evidence to convict him of those charges. Instead, we found a man remarkably universal in outlook, whose loyalty was to the downtrodden and to the truth as he saw it, rather than to any tribe or sect. His critique of feudal culture in his memoir, his embrace of all linguistic groups as equal stakeholders, and his secular critique of the Iranian Revolution all attest to his principled approach over any communal considerationseurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org. Such integrity is perhaps why, despite shifts in fashion, Sibte Hasan continues to command respect across different circles – he is often called Pakistan's Gramsci, or a gadfly in Socratic moldeurope-solidaire.orgeurope-solidaire.org, someone who kept prodding society's conscience.

Evaluating Sibte Hasan in light of subaltern and postcolonial theory is an exercise in intellectual history – it helps us understand the context and limitations of his era's left discourse. Yes, he was a product of his times and his framework was largely within the grand narrative of Enlightenment and Marxism. But he was also ahead of his time in many ways: talking about scientific outlook, interfaith

and intercultural harmony, women's emancipation, secular governance – issues that are still contentious today. Ranajit Guha or Dipesh Chakrabarty might fault his Eurocentrism, but they would hardly fault his commitment to human liberation. Ashis Nandy might critique his dismissal of traditional worldviews, but Nandy would surely acknowledge that Sibte Hasan's opposition to bigotry and authoritarianism was morally imperative. In the mosaic of South Asian thought, Sibte Hasan occupies a space akin to the liberal-rationalist radicals of the 18th and 19th centuries – in the lineage of Thomas Paine, or Raja Rammohan Roy, or Sir Syed – yet also colored by the 20th-century socialist imagination.

Ultimately, Sibte Hasan's legacy can be seen as a double-edged sword viewed from our postcolonial present. On one edge, it is the sword of reason that he wielded to cut through the knots of ignorance and fear – a sword that we still very much need in battles against extremism and unreason. On the other edge, it is the sword forged in the smithy of Western modernity – which, while sharp, may not fit every hand or every context without adaptation. The task for contemporary scholars and activists inspired by Sibte Hasan is to carry forward his "pursuit of enlightenment"europe-solidaire.org among the people, while also critically updating the tools and narratives we use, learning from the criticisms of postcolonial thinkers. Sibte Hasan himself, ever the rationalist, would likely approve of such self-critique and evolution. He once raised fundamental questions to fellow writers about why and for whom they write, answering that those with a conscious purpose seek to rouse minds and spark debate so that society can progress【26†L193- L201】. By engaging critically yet constructively with Sibte Hasan's own corpus, we are doing just that – using reasoned analysis to carry forward the flame of roshan khayali that he tended, in hopes that it will illuminate new paths in our postcolonial present.

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